

(S) 14-15

WASHINGTON OFFICE ON LATIN AMERICA

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Tex Harris
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Dear Tex,

Please forgive the inordinate delay in getting back to you. I knew I was slow, but this is ridiculous. All I can say by way of excuse is that I was sick when I returned to DC, and that the WOLA office pace was its usual hectic self, so I've been very late doing follow-up from the trip. I hope your work load has increased significantly--I've been singing your praises, encouraging many different folks to get in touch with you. Mind you, it is not a WOLA tradition to be overly impressed by FSO's, so please regard these remarks as high praise!

The immediate impetus prompting this letter: during the last few days I was able to meet --at last--with your new boss, Raul Castro. You probably will have met him by the time this arrives and will understand why it was so difficult to answer some of the questions developed ahead of time to present to him--he is rather like a prickly pear. Behind all the bluster, it's tricky to figure out exactly where the man stands. He assured that human rights was a priority; it was Carter's policy and since he, Castro, was a Carter friend and appointee, it was his policy priority also. When asked how he might respond or promote human rights, he said he wouldn't comment, but had to wait to see the situation first hand. I complimented you to him--I don't know if I did you a favor or a disservice. I couldn't elicit anything like criteria for human rights improvements that should precede any military sales licenses (we aren't selling them anything anyway; they are buying in Europe and Israel; we don't have any leverages--R.C.). Well, at least he knows we exist and that we'll be watching his behavior. I did mention to him a concern expressed to me, namely that there might be efforts "limpiar los carceles"--i.e., remove those prisoners severely tortured or witnesses to torture--before any amnesty, (presently rumors circulate about some sort of Christmas amnesty). He, R.C., asked the desk officers to take note of the concern and see if anything developed.

The Schphansky-Helfeld report on Paraguay is not yet available. As soon as it is, I'll get a copy mailed to you.

Just because Uruguay and Argentina have so many common troubles, and because Juan knows many of the people in/of Argentina personally, Juan Ferreira will be picking up the Argentina work in WOLA. I'll begin working on Brazil--this has been a serious weakness with us so far, so I have much work to do. *Juan was also present at R.C. interview.*

(WOLA)
We co-sponsored a Conference on Human Rights in the Southern Cone--McGovern and Harkin were the Congressional hosts. Speaking for the democratic opposition of Argentina was Hector Sandler. I don't know if the Argentine press picked it up, but the Uruguay papers had a field day with the Conference. Speaking at the luncheon was Leonel Castillo, head of INS. He is trying to systematize the US policy toward refugees and asylum--very encouraging.

Jo Harris

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